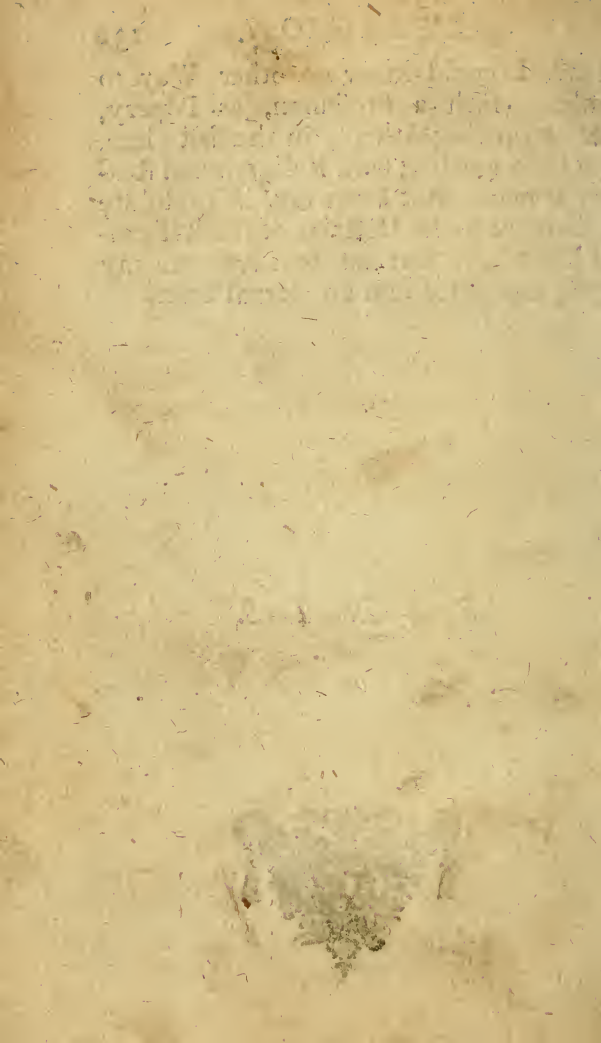




SCS #1077

Thomas F. Torrance



A
DESCRIPTION
OF THE
Confirmed State
OF A
CHRISTIAN.

By the late Reverend Mr. ROBERT
FLEMING, Author of *the Fulfilling
of the Scriptures.*

G L A S G O W,

Printed by ROBERT FOULIS, and sold by him,
and other Bookfellers in *Glasgow* and *Edinburgh*.

MD.CC.XLIII.

DECEMBER 1853

1853

Wm. L. B. B. B.

CHURCH

of the
Methodist Episcopal Church
South

of the
State of Georgia

Wm. L. B. B. B.

TO THE
READER.

I*t is like thou mayest think strange, how these few Sheets in the Close fall in here, after the foregoing Part was finished; but tho' they meet in one Design and Interest, yet was not this then intended until the former was done, and if it might tend to a solid Use and Fruit unto any, I shall forbear a further Apology herein.*

I may truly say, the Weight of the Subject hath carried it some further Length than was designed, when I so much sought to be short, as I aim at in

any Thing of this Kind, that through my Desire to avoid any unnecessary multiplying of Words, I fear lest it may make some Things seem a little dark at the first View: Tho' I hope, not upon any serious Perusal of the same. Two Things I must further crave Leave to add,

1. That when some succinct View of the great Assistances, and Confirmations of our Faith is here offered, which these of the lowest Capacity of the Church, might with that Advantage improve, as in a few Hours, by reading it sometimes over, may be so far impressed on their Mind and Judgment, that they could give some clear and judicious Account thereof; it may be by such, but seriously weighed, and taken to Heart of what concern the Use hereof is.

2. That I humbly judge also, it were a most special Service for the Truth in this Day, to have some short Directory, and Remembrancer of the great Acts of the Lord,

Lord, and Monuments of his Providence now under the New Testament, in that Manner held forth, as might most tend to some universal Use of all within the Church. I confess, my Desire pressed me to some small Essay herein, with Intent to have joined it to this Work, but having with much Conviction laid this wholly aside, as to any further Appearance that Way, so is it with an earnest Desire, that some more qualified, might take to Heart, and under their Hand, so great a Service, both for their Generation and Posterity. It is sure, the Lord hath designed his People to be taught the Greatness of his Works, as well as the Precepts of his Word, and as no Duty is more pressed than this under the Old Testament, both as to Publick and Family Instruction, so are we no less accountable in these last Times, for this Improvement, of such as are of known, public, and uncontrollable Evidence, and should be the Care of each Age to have

*that solemn Remembrance kept up here-
of, so as not a few, but the very Mul-
titude within the Church, might be as a
public Library, and Repository of the
same.*





A
 DESCRIPTION
 OF THE
 Confirmed State
 OF A
 CHRISTIAN.



THO' the Measure of all Christians Establishment in the Truth be not alike, but must have Respect to their different Trials, Talents, and Improvements for this End; yet may it cause Astonishment to see, how rare any Study of this Kind is now to

to be found. When 'tis not only one of the highest Concerns of Christianity, but in a more than ordinary Way called for, as the Work of this Day; yea, being this is a Part of Religion, which seems least improved of any, for the more general State of Professors within the Church; under some Conviction hereof, was this Essay designed; wherein, with humble Confidence, I may say, the Truth hath been sought with that serious Enquiry into the Nature of these Things held forth, as I judged needful for such, who have so great an Interest, and adventure not only through Time, but for all Eternity, to support themselves upon the alone Certainty hereof; and ere these Days of Trial, which we now see, pass over this Generation, it may be found, this was not unseasonable, or without Cause directed to such a Time, if the Lord graciously bleſs the same; nor will it, I hope, be found unnecessary to present yet further, some clear Prospect of a *Confirmed State in Religion*, and what those ought to be, who, with Light, and Assurance of Mind, are like to follow the Lord fully in such a Day; which is here offered in a seven-fold Character, under which a *truly confirmed*

firmed Christian in the Truth of his Profession may be stated.

CHARACTER I.

He is one, who hath another Sense, and Impression of this great Study for attaining to a confirmed State in Religion, and is on higher Grounds pressed to follow the same, than most of the visible Church do apprehend; and should be thus considered.

1. As one to whom the *Glory of the Christian Profession* is in the highest Degree dear, and who would have the World see, that such as embrace the same, and do most fully adventure on the Testimony of God in his Word, are those who walk on the highest Principles of true and enlightned Reason; yea, who take deeply to Heart, that Obligation which is on all, who desire to advance the Repute, and Honour of the Truth, to be in such Terms therewith upon its own Evidence, that they may know how to confute and shame Atheists, and Infidels, if called thereunto.

2. Who see also, that such is the State of fallen Man, as stands in need of all

4 *A Description of the confirmed*

the Contributions that can be, not only to strengthen the Christian's Faith, to bear out against the strong Assaults of Infidelity, but to gain also more Credit and Veneration to the Truth, with those who are not easily dealt with, but by such Means as bear some Congruity to their natural Light and Reason; for which End the Lord hath afforded his ministerial Helps, to render the Unbelief of the World, and all Pretence of Hesitation about his Truths more inexcusable.

3. He also sees, that the most important and fundamental Truths of Christianity, need the greatest Confirmation in his Faith; and those, who enter into so high and discriminating a Profession from the Residue of the World, need to know in what Manner they embrace the same. He sees, that the natural Order of Things does absolutely require to have the Foundation sure laid, on which so great a Superstructure must rest, so as he judgeth it a Work by itself, and to need some peculiar retiring his Soul in the most serious Recess, and Composure thereof, to attain a Stedfastness in the Truth, and to know the strong and firm Conveyances of that greatest Mystery of the Gospel, in
such

such a Manner, as needs not a new Miracle to confirm the same. But he knows, that no Sharpness of Mens natural Understanding about the Truth, can ever attain a true Rest, and Settlement of Mind therein, without an humble and serious Spirit, stooping down before the Wisdom of God, and entring as a little Child into his School; and by that humble Practice and Obedience of the Gospel, there is an undoubted coming up to the greatest Assurance and clearest Demonstrations of the same, as *John* vii. 17.

4. He knows, that as nothing tends more to shake Mens Spirits; and stagger them about the Truth, than a light and transient View hereof, so does the greatest Establishment follow, on the nearest Approach by a deep and serious Enquiry about the same; and he clearly sees, that if such, who look but at a Distance on the Way of Religion, did but once come to have their Spirits exceed in a more serious Reflection thereon, the first View they should have, could not but be Matter of Wonder and Amazement; to think what can support a Soul, in so marvellous a Way, as the Life and Practice of Christianity, which is so visible above Nature,

ture, and that wherein they must do Violence to the same; wherein they must part with the Multitude, and oppose themselves to the strongest Tide of Example, and must endure also in Hope, and believe for Things not seen, (which were never the Object of human Sense,) to any in this Earth; and are oft called to part with the most desirable Things of Sense, upon the alone Credit of their Faith, yea, wherein they must enter that Profession, on no other Terms, than to be Martyrs for the same, and seal it with their Blood; so that he must needs see a Christian, according to the Rule and Institution of the Gospel, to be the greatest Riddle and Wonder of any Sight within Time; but when such come more close and near upon this Trial, and have once understood the Nature and Greatness of that Security, which these have to adventure on, and what is the Glory of their Hope, and the sure Spring of their Supplies, for their Work and Trials within Time; then will this second Wonderun-speakably exceed the first; how 'tis possible, that such are not of a more raised and enlarged Spirit, in the Service of the Gospel, in that short Season they have here

here for it on the Earth, and how their Difficulty should not be more, to bear the Joy of so great a Prospect and Expectation, than to bear any present Grievs and Troubles. Yea, how a Man's Life, who indeed sincerely makes the Christian Profession, is not in some more continued Transport of Ravishment and Wondering, to know, that they are surely made for their eternal State in another World, and are among those, on whom the glorious God hath chosen to have the exceeding Riches of his Grace shewed forth, in the Regions of Blessedness above forever.

5. He hath another Sight and Prospect of the Christian Creed, than most who give an easy Assent thereunto; and hath his Reason so dazled with the Revelation of the Gospel, and of the Wonders thereof, as hath put him to such an Exercise, as that 2 *Chron.* vi. 18. How to credit his Eyes therewith, the more deep Reflection he hath upon the same; but will God in very Deed dwell with Men on the Earth? He judgeth, that they, who after some fluctuating Suspence, are admitted to see the Truth of Christianity, with that Certainty of its Evidence, as the

B

Greatness

Greatness of such a Discovery does require; may have some Resemblance to that Transport which the Angels had at the first Creation; when the Morning Stars sung together, and the Sons of God shouted for Joy; to see themselves thus, who were brought out of pure nothing, entred into that ineffable Light of seeing God, and also their own Blessedness in him, in so high a Degree. So that he accounts it one of the highest Attainments of Religion, for a Christian indeed to believe the Articles of his own Faith, and have his Soul, as fully persuaded hereof, as of his Being; that such a Time assuredly was, and is now many Ages since past, when the glorious Redeemer of the Church, the second Person of the Godhead, came down from Heaven, and was revealed in our Nature; that on him, as Surety to divine Justice in the Room of the elect Church, was the whole Guilt and Sin thereof transferred; and in this marvellous Way did the holy God take Satisfaction to himself, by himself; that thus our Nature is exalted, by the Incarnation of Christ above the Nature of Angels; that the Time is near, when the meanest afflicted Christian shall take in

no other Air, than the Breathings of the higher Paradise above, and now hath an Eternity of Joy and Blessedness before him; that, within a very little Time, he shall know this Welcome of our blessed Redeemer to his Followers here on the Earth, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom, &c.* When he shall take off the Cross, and put on the Crown, when it shall be then no more a Matter of Faith, but of Sense, to be partaker of that Inheritance with the Saints in Light; and know those proper Mansions in that State of Glory, and peculiar Assignment thereunto, which all the Redeemed shall then have; and be put in the same Rank with the elect Angels; to be as those pure Flames of Love and Joy; yea, know what it is to walk in the Streets of the *New Jerusalem*, which are as Gold, transparent as Chrystal; and what that Meeting will be of his Soul perfected, and in a triumphant State, with his glorified Body, raised incorruptible, and never to part any more; and to have his proper Share of that blessed and greatest Solemnity, that shall be celebrated in Heaven; the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb, with the whole triumphant Church; and hear

that honourable Account which the great Judge will then make of these Trials of his Faith, and sharp Conflicts which he had gone through within Time; with that solemn Testimony of Approbation, which will be given hereof! And, since 'tis sure, these great Things must be a Part of the Christian Faith; can it be strange, that such, as would in that Manner converse therewith, (tho' they be not yet seen) as no less undoubted Realities than any present Objects of Sense, cannot be easily satisfied with a low Degree of Evidence and Confirmation of their Judgment; but would have their Joy perfected so far as this State of Mortality can bear; and so find it easy to rejoice and glory in Tribulation, and to weep now for a Season, who are to rejoice for ever; yea, to say in the Words of *Mephibosheth*, Let them take it all, and enjoy the same, since he, who is their Life, and exceeding Joy, lives and reigns, who is infinitely better to them than all these Things.

6. He accounts the strengthning of his Faith, to be such a Concern, not only as it is his Soul's Adventure for all Eternity, but as the highest Way of glorifying God

here:

here : That whatever tends to a more full Confirmation of the same, he reckons also one of the greatest Additions to his Joy and Comfort within Time ; and that these manifold Assistances, (with such Reduplication thereof,) which the Lord hath himself given for this End, are such, that no Fragments of so rich a Talent should be lost ; and tho' he knows the greatest Demonstrations of our Faith can add nothing to the Certainty of divine Truth in itself ; yet are they thus given, in regard of the strong Trials of a Christian's Life, and of what their Weaknesses stand in need of for Support.

7. 'Tis in this Study, he sees and takes to Heart, how not only the Condition of Man in the Earth, but the Profession of Christ also calls for such a Reckoning, that he may have Trials in that Manner dispensed, that no visible Refuge will be found in the least to stand by him, but all human Comfort and Assistance will fail him, so that he must needs lay in Ballast now in its Season, and be founded thereon, with that Assurance of Judgment, as is needful for that Day, when he must either get through in the alone Way of believing, against Sense, or perish.

rish. And tho' no such Attainments of Light can bear out then, without present and immediate Influences from above, and that it is sure, according to the Day, so must the Christian's Strength be, yet does he see also the Want of an established Judgment, and of some proper Stock laid up of Aids and Assistances this Way against a sharp Storm, is like to make sad Work among the Professors of this Age, ere the Trials of such a Time have done their Work.

8. He sees also, how the greatest Contest, which is this Day in the World, is betwixt God and Man, upon the Truth and Assurance of his Word; and that the highest Trial and Probation of a Christian, in which all the Trials of his Life do still meet, may be resolved here; if they receive the Testimony of God, in his Word, as an absolute Security to rely on, yea, or not. And tho' this is the peculiar Glory of the only true God, to have an absolute Dependence of his whole Work on himself, and to be the alone Centre of his People's Rest; yet may nothing be more evident, than that with most he bears that Name of being their Trust; when the whole Burden and
 Weight

Weight thereof lies alone upon visible Grounds ; so that those Bonds and Promises, which he hath himself given unto Men, do bear no more Credit, than they have some external Surety of in the Earth, which they still look after, to stand, as it were, good and responsible for the same, which is the highest Indignity can be offered to the glorious Majesty of God.

9. He does much take to Heart this present Period of Time, wherein the fluctuating Suspence, and halting of so many under a visible Profession of the Truth, is now one of the most dismal Signs hereof ; and that it seems to be the Time, wherein the Lord will, in an unusual Way, take this Generation off from any implicite Profession of the same ; and when that great Roll of visible Professors in all the Reformed Churches, may be ere long in that Manner called, as each must answer to his own Name, and be put to stand to the Proof before the World ; when no temporal Interest, but internal Motives, and Certainty of the Truth, upon its own Evidence, must bear one out ; yea, that the most established may ere long find it not easy to be kept from staggering ; and a few Days come in the Church's Way,

Way, more remarkable for Trial, than have been in some Ages before.

CHARACTER II.

A truly confirmed Christian, may be thus also stated, as one, who is, in the *first Place*, most deeply taken up about that *rare Plot of Man's Redemption*; and to see these great, and wonderful Truths there, not singly, and apart, but in that Harmony, Order, and Consent of all the Parts thereof, as they are linkt together in this marvellous Frame; so as to make the Whole one entire Piece. And whereof no Part does in the least interfere with another. Which he finds to be one of the most principal Demonstrations of this great Mystery of the Gospel, which the Lord hath given for confirming his People's Faith. And thus, in another Manner than formerly, can he now entertain his Soul herewith; and have his Joy unspeakably heightened.

I. To set at once the ruined State of fallen Man, and what a Flood-gate of all Evil is let loose on *Adam's Race*, not only morally in Sin, but what is Penal in the Woe and Miseries thereof; yea, such
a State,

a State, where all hope of Relief is for ever cut off in the Way of Nature, or by any created Help; and where the Execution of a righteous Sentence on Men for the voluntary Violation of a Law, just, holy, and good, can be no Impeachment in the least of the Righteousness of God; but then therewith he does see, such a Relief brought to Light, as can not only answer the whole Extent of this Ruin, but the Glory of God more eminently displayed therein, than if the Law had been obeyed, or absolutely executed in its Penalty on the whole Race of Man. Yea, which makes this more wonderful, to see a higher Dispensation of Grace unto Man, now under the Gospel, than was to *Adam* in his primitive State; whereby innumerable Christians are made to endure and prevail over stronger Assaults, than broke him even in his Integrity; which is a Thing so marvellous, that the great and infinite God only could find out and effect it.

2. He does now see, how clear a Consistence and Harmony is here, that he who had no Sin by Inhesion, but was holy, harmless, and undefiled, should be under the greatest Weight of Sin by Imputation;

putation ; and by the exactest Rule of divine Justice, be made liable to answer both the whole Duty, and full Penalty of the Law ; having, as Surety, betwixt the Creditor and Debtor, put himself in his People's Room, to answer the full Demands thereof, both for Debt and Duty.

3. It is here, he does see, that blest Consent and Harmony betwixt the spotless Justice of God, and his marvellous Grace ; so as his Love is to the highest glorified, in that marvellous Way, which secures the full and compleat Satisfaction of his Law, and all the Rights of inviolable Justice.

4. Whilst he is thus dazled with the Greatness of such a Light, and put to enquire what such a Mystery can mean, he is then further led on to see, that rare Plot and Contrivance of the Covenant of Reconciliation between God and Man, here within Time ; to be the very Duplicate, and Counterpart of that eternal Transaction and Stipulation between the Father and the Son ; and thus sees whatever God hath declared, and promised in the former to his Church, was first promised and secured to our blessed Head in the Covenant of Redemption ; wherein, as with a
reverend

reverend and awful Distance, so with the greatest Evidence of Light, he is made to see here these reciprocal Obligations betwixt them, and mutual Trust for making good the whole Terms thereof in the appointed Time.

5. He does also clearly see, that rare Order, and Harmony of Time, in these signal Periods of the Revelation of this great Mystery of Christ, which from its more dark Discovery, and Dawning, did still more gloriously open itself to the Church; by a gradual Light, and unvail-
ing of the same, as the Sun in its Course unto the perfect Day; yea, he hath his Faith unspeakably confirmed, to see herewith the *Gospel Church* being still the same, whether of *Jews* or *Gentiles*; and how that Series and Consent hath yet never been broken off, since the beginning of a Church, called forth from the Residue of Mankind, set apart, as a peculiar People for the Lord; where none ever had Right and Privilege to be Members of the same, but by Faith in the *Messias*, and Profession of their Obedience to his Laws.

6. It is in this Union and Harmony, he sees all the Branches, and Parts of Gospel
Obedi-

Obedience most exactly meet and terminate, to advance, both the greatest Excellency and Blessedness of Man, and assimilate him to the blessed Image of God. Yea, how all the Rules and Precepts thereof, do so entirely conspire for this End, as may constrain the World to see, and admire the glorious Nature and Perfections of him, whose Laws these are, wherein he does so brightly shine forth.

7. Nor can he look seriously herein, and not see that sweet Concord, as a Part of this Harmony, which is betwixt the promissory and mandatory Part of the Gospel; so as the Christian's Comfort is most fully established, and no Duty abolished; but the very Path-road to the most full Enjoyments of the Promise and proper Way to attain Rest and Tranquillity of Spirit, must be ever by taking on the Yoke of Christ.

8. Yea, to confirm this entire Union and Harmony more fully, he now sees, that exact and marvellous Correspondence which is betwixt that first fundamental Promise of the *Messias*, and the Event; betwixt all the ancient Figures and Types of the Levitical Service, and the Revelation of Christ himself, in which all these

did

did meet, as in their proper Centre, and now have their full End and Accomplishment.

9. His Confirmation thus grows to see, that wonderful Consent of Christianity, and native Result hereof, to put fallen Man in a due Posture towards God, towards his Neighbours, and towards himself; so as he may know by Faith and Adoration, how to enjoy God, and his Brother, by Love; and thus by Patience, Meekness and Humility, to possess his own Soul, and enjoy himself.

10. Yea, it is in this rare and wonderful Frame, he is made to see, and no Sight can be like this, that exact Correspondence which is betwixt the Foundation and Superstructure, how the whole Tract of the Gospel is but one entire and compleat Means to glorify God, and restore fallen Man to the highest Blessedness. How that excellent Stream of Sanctification, does flow from that Fountain Head of an eternal Decree; which does still run under the Ground, until it break up at last in the Heart of each Christian, by the effectual Call of the Gospel; and thus runs down through Time, until it lose itself in that unconceiveable Deep of Perfection

C

fection and Glory. Thus is it, that each Christian might attain some higher Degrees of Confirmation in his Faith, than most seem either to know, or look after, if he understood more how to improve this rare comparing Work of Religion, by setting the great Truths and Principles thereof in their Order and Dependence, so as each may be seen, in its necessary Coherence with other, and under its proper Aspect.

But the more deep Reflection and Enquiry he hath herein, he is the more made to wonder, and finds this one of the great Assaults to his Faith; that the Revelation of Christ, and Redemption by his Blood, should have no greater Effects this Day amongst Men, and that the Christian World is not in some other Manner awakened with the Glory of this Light, and prest after a larger spreading and Diffusion of this highest and universal Good to poor Mankind; yea, the more he considers this, it doth heighten his Amazement to think, how Mens Designs in the Matter of Duty and Service for the Kingdom of Christ, can be so low within Time, whose Designs and Hopes
in

in the Close thereof, are so high in the Matter of Enjoyment; or take so little to Heart, that the whole Day of the Dispensation of the Gospel, amidst the most dismal Trials that may fall in therewith, is a continued Time wherein we are called to keep the Feast, and from one Age to another celebrate the same, as a perpetual Jubilee of Joy and Exultation, since Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us; but, oh! how rare a Thing seems this to be, and how little of that Flame and Fervency of Love to our blessed Redeemer is now kindled on his Altar? Such as might be expected on such wonderful Incitements thereto, and which once were in the Church.

CHARACTER III.

Tho' a confirmed Christian, must be specially stated as such, one who knows the internal Part of Religion, and Sealing Work of the Holy Ghost on his own Soul, which is not by Words, but Things of the highest Truth, Substance and Reality; yet is he not satisfied to know this by spiritual Sense, until he can see the same with the furthest Evidence of Light also

to his Mind; and have no less a clear and judicious Trial of this great Mystery of experimental Religion, for Confirmation of his Faith, than to be sensibly affected with the felt Power thereof. And, in the first Place, why this is necessarily requisite and called for, with respect to the confirmed State of a Christian, may be thus considered, on some few Grounds.

1. That the Things of Religion, which must be experienced within Time, are such sublime and wonderful Mysteries, as may be just Matter of Astonishment, and make Men a Wonder to themselves, to think that these present Pledges of so great a Hope which is to come, are no Shadows, no Appearances of Things, but most sure and undoubted Realities; and that such there are this Day in the Earth, who know so near a Converse with an invisible God, and the supernatural Truths of his Word, with the sensible Feeling of the inestimable Love of Christ, by this Demonstration of Experience; yea, who in such dismal Times do assuredly know, what the Joy of his Presence, and an immediate Fellowship with their blessed Head is, upon the greatest Certainty of Trial; since these are so high,

high, and marvelous Things, which exceed all natural Understanding, as the felt Sweetness of their Enjoyment should not more deeply take Men up, than to see the Truth and Sureness of these Principles, whereon they build.

2. Because this Testimony of the Truth of experimental Religion, should be understood, not only as 'tis of highest Use for Christians personal Comfort and Establishment; but with respect to the public Interest of the Church; a special Duty it is to have the Credit of this greatest Testimony and Seal, demonstrably cleared, with the furthest Strength of harmonious and argumentative Reason, for such who look but at a Distance yet thereon; which may not only awaken them to some deeper Sense and Impression hereof, but constrain them to see, how no natural Science hath more clear and firm Demonstrations, than the experimental Part of Christianity, which is the very Life and Soul thereof, may have to Mens Reason and Judgment, tho' they never knew it within themselves. Yea, for this End, should such, as have experienced the Truth and Virtue of the Gospel, reckon themselves as Witnesses;

24 *A Description of the confirmed*

who are judicially obliged to put their Seal thereunto; and is now more called for in an Age, when no particular Truth seems more strongly impugned, than the Reality of experimental Godliness is; and become as a public Theam of Derision; tho' Men must either quit the whole Revelation of the Scripture, or see this to be as essential to the Constitution of a Christian, as vital Principles are to a living Man.

3. Yea, 'tis sure herein, that such as take Religion to Heart, must needs look to be put to the greatest Trial of its Certainty and should most nearly concern themselves, to know if they can abide, as firmly by their spiritual Sense, as by that which is natural; and do know as surely in themselves the Operations and Motions of a Spiritual Life, as that they have Being by Nature; and that here be no doubtful or abstract Notions, but which have had deep Trial and Reflection on them; that they, who dare to venture their eternal State on the known Certainty thereof, do Reason their Souls to a stedfast Adherence to the Truth, when they are called to sacrifice their Lives thereto; to wit, from the rare Experiments

periments and Proofs, they have oft had of the same in their own Trial.

4. It doth more specially call for a demonstrative clearing of the Credit of this Testimony, as one of the Services of Religion, to promote the Kingdom of Christ amongst Men, which seems least improved of any, with respect to the general State of such who are within the Church, who are so great Strangers to the same ; yea, should be judged one of the great Wants of this Day, when Atheism is now at so astonishing a Height, that it is not more studied to have the experimental Part of Religion, (which in itself lies deep and hid, and is a Secret betwixt God and the Christian's Soul,) with such Clearness, and by that Manner of Evidence demonstrated to the World, as might tend to beget some more awful Sense and Conviction hereof, when such clear and unanswerable Grounds might be improved for this End, on those who look thereon, as some strange and dark Riddle; so as they could no more deny, or withstand the Evidences hereof, than that they have a living Soul which yet they never saw ; or could ever be the Object of human Sense. And, how sad a Prospect

pect should this give of the greatest Part of the Christian World, who not only know nothing of the true Glory and spiritual Powers of Christianity, but have not the very Notion, or any Sense of the Reality of such a Thing?

But, in the *second Place*, it is thus, that each Christian, for being solidly confirmed in the Way of Religion, may as clearly see, as he does sensibly feel, the Truth of his own Experience, and have his Faith as fully established by this inward and great Demonstration of the Things of God, as his Affections are quickened, upon such strong and demonstrative Grounds of the Certainty hereof, as these are,

I. By considering his present and former State; that not in a Dream, but in the most deep and serious Composure of Spirit, he knows that once he was blind, and wholly estranged from this Mystery of Christian Experience, which now he does see; and once had the same Sentiment hereof with such who do never at all reflect on the same; but no sooner did the Truth, and Power of Religion seize on his Soul, than he found himself entred into a new World, to know the

Dawnings

Dawnings of this marvelous Light, and what belongs to these Enjoyments, and vital Acts of Christianity, that have not the least Dependence on any natural Cause.

2. By considering the marvelous Superstructure of experimental Religion, which from the inward Observation of Christians in all Ages, is such as the World could not almost contain the Books that might be written hereof; which yet is so entirely founded on one and the same Foundation, and does in all the Lines of this great Circumference, still meet in the same Centre; yea, thus how entire and harmonious a Thing Religion, in all the Parts thereof is within upon the Soul, as well as without; so as every Step in this Way of the Experience of the Saints is no groping in the Dark, but what is by Line and by Rule, with as sure and demonstrable a Connection with the external Testimony of the Word, as there is in Nature, betwixt the Cause and the Effect; which affords a more wonderful Assistance to his Faith, than the greatest external Miracles could ever do; and tho' the Spirit of God, does sometimes, in an extraordinary Manner, reveal himself to
Men

Men, (as acts of his Sovereign Prerogative, which make no Rule.) yet with the established Constitutions of his Word, does the continued Experience of the Saints most harmoniously ever correspond.

3. By considering thus also the Being and Reality of Grace, not in its Effects only, but in its proper Cause and Original, and how the Truth of Holiness in the Life of a Christian, is so express a Transcript of the Gospel, in its external Revelation; that the Impress doth not more clearly answer the Seal on the Wax, than it doth beget the same Form and Image of itself in such as believe; yea also, that Conformity it bears to the ever-blessed Archetype, as well as to the revealed Rule; and, how bright a Discovery is this of so glorious a Being and Nature, to which 'tis conformed? Who is the alone Pattern and Example of all Truth and Holiness; which is so great a Discovery, as he is made to wonder, that Men, in this Age, are so much awakened to find out the true Phenomena of Nature, (tho' in its own Room a most choice Study, and specially desirous,) and will be as in a Transport, upon some
rare

rare natural Experiment, as made one in that Manner, cry out, *I have found it, I have found it*; whilst here is another Kind of Demonstration, and of more transcendent Interest than all these could ever amount to, on which the Eyes of most are this Day shut.

4. By considering that unchangeable Congruity, which is betwixt the Nature of these Things enjoined in the whole Institutions of the Gospel, and Mens being made happy thereby, now in their present State; and how great a temporal Revenue of the Fruits of Religion, as inward Confidence, Peace, and Serenity of Mind, doth as natively follow the Life and Practice hereof, as the Fruit of a Tree answers to its Kind, and is ever found the alone true Relief of Mankind, against all the Grievs and Bitterness of Time; yea, that 'tis no Distance of Place, but of Mens Spirit by Impurity and Corruption, that makes so sad a Distance betwixt God and Man here in the Earth.

5. He is thus further confirmed upon his great Testimony of experimental Religion, by considering that 'tis sure such as do bear this Witness are known,

I. To

1. To be such, who are of the most discerning and judicious in the Things of Reason, as well as any else. 2. Whose Walk and Practice use to have the greatest Authority over Mens Consciences with whom they converse. 3. Who are found most intently taken up in the retired Work and Duties of Religion; that can have no Respect to the Witness and Observation of others. 4. Who seek no implicit Credit from any herein; but do pray Men to come, and see, and prove the same in their own Experience; with an Appeal to the most exact Inquiry, and rational Trial of all Mankind, if here be any casual Thing; and if that Testimony of the doctrinal and experimental Part of Religion, be not still one and the same. 5. Who also out of the most remote Places of the Earth, and otherwise Strangers amongst themselves, do yet most harmoniously meet in the same Witness, and are thus mutually disclosed to each other, by a near and feeling Intercourse of their Souls, from such an Oneness in a spiritual State, and those specifick Properties of a spiritual and new Nature, with as discernible Evidence, as if one Man should meet with another of the

the

the same Kind, in such a Place of the Earth, which were only inhabited with Beasts.

6. By considering also, with a deep and serious Reflection hereon, that sure and known Conjunction, which is betwixt the most rare Experiences of a Christian's Life, and the most searching Trials thereof, with that uniform Consent that hath in all Ages of the Church been, in such marvelous Things, as these.

1. What solemn Tokens and Testimonies of the Love of God, and his Acceptance, are found usually to meet his People in the Entry of some great Trial or Service for him; even in some unusual Manner then, in the Sense whereof, as it was with *Elijah*, they have been made to go many Days after in a Wilderness-State; yea, how this does not respect Persons only, but Churches; that the Word still useth to go before with some remarkable confirming Work, to secure the Heart before the Cross, and some special Trial of Persecution comes. 2. That, as each Day hath its proper Burden and Work, so hath it its proper Allowance provided for the same; which should be no less sought after by a Christian, than
D his

his daily Bread, and when the Pressure of such a Day grows to some more singular Height ; so also should the Experience hereof be in Faith sought for and expected. 3. How the choicest Mercies are reserved to the saddest Times of a Christian's Lot ; and most usually cross to their own Choice, and they have had the greatest Struglings with those Methods of Providence, which in the Issue tended most to their Advancement. 4. Yea, how the Returnings of a long deferred Hope, after much humble waiting have been to them, as a Pisgah, whence they have not only had a clear and comforting Prospect of their by-past Trials, but have been more fully confirmed for the Time to come ; and can bear now that Testimony, that the Lord hath cleared all past Things to them, and hath taken the Vail off his Work, which for long had been as a dark and strange Riddle.

7. This likewise gives a most clear and confirming Prospect of that great Seal of Experience, when he can now see, both in his own Case, and of others, what the Issue of believing in a singular Exigency and Trial, and upon some special Act of Trust and Adventure herein, does at last
come

come to ; which, the more deeply 'tis considered, he finds one of the most peculiar Assistances to his Faith; and one of the greatest Attainments of experimental Religion within Time ; when he can thus see the same Way of believing, in some strong and extraordinary Assaults, which he hath found to crush and break him herein ; which hath carried so many thorough in their saddest Trials ; bring him also in his Turn, to be an Instance in the same Kind, to bear an honourable Testimony, to this sure and excellent Way of believing before the World, that none may fear after him to hold by the Promise of God, and venture on that Security, tho' it then seem against Hope, whose Dispensations, did yet never give his Word the Lye.

CHARACTER IV.

He is a truly confirmed Christian, who in a dismal Time, is not staggered in his Faith from the present Signs and Appearances thereof, but hath his Soul ballasted with such solid Grounds of Confirmation against the same, that those Providences, whereat others do most stumble,

34 *A Description of the confirmed*
tend to his further strengthening in the
Way of the Lord, when he does now
clearly see,

I. How Tribulation, and the Cross,
make one of the most illustrious and
beautiful Parts of the whole Frame of
Providence about the Church, and in the
Lot of each Christian; so, as there can
be no possible stumbling to any for Want
of Light here, that sore Trials and Dis-
tresses should most remarkably follow
those in the Journey, who have an eter-
nal Blessedness before them in the close
hereof; when so great a Part of the Scrip-
ture is directed, not only for Comfort,
but for clear Conduct of the Christian's
Faith, through all the Intricacies and La-
byrinths of such a Dispensation. He sees
how highly congruous it is to the infinite
Wisdom of God, that so strait and nar-
row a Way, in such a State of Trial as is
here, should go before the State of ever-
lasting Enjoyment; that there should be
such a Stage and Theatre also, whereon
the passive Graces of the Spirit, may not
only be exercised, but displayed in their
true Lustre, and Glory before Angels,
and Men. Yea, that thus the Redeemed
of

of the Lord should be first trained in so sharp a Warfare, as may not only put a due Value, and Respect on the Greatness of that Triumph, and Reward which is to come, but be Matter of ineffable Joy and Exultation, that ever they were admitted thus to evidence their Love and Adherence to their blessed Head, and his Truth here on the Earth; and accounted worthy to be put on some hotter Service, and to peculiar Trials and Conflicts, this Way beyond others, for some Example and Encouragement to the Church in their Day; and here also, he can now see, how the greatest Enjoyments of Comfort, are more owing to the most sharp and afflicting Trials of their Life, than to the greatest external Calm; and that to endure patiently, and suffer for the Name of CHRIST, is such a Privilege, as the elect Angels have not been admitted to. Yea, that the Lord's chastning Work, and forest smiting of his own, is an Act also of saving; so that thus, the more deeply he searcheth here, the more does he see, admire, and consent to that glorious Piece of the Administration of Providence about the Church; and finds it to

be one of the greatest Confirmations of his Faith within Time.

1. He does now clearly see, how the Truth and Faithfulness of God is commensurate to his whole Work of Providence; and that all the Lines hereof, as they do lead from his revealed Counsel in the Scripture, (which is the adequate Sign of his eternal Counsel and Decrees,) so do they return thither again, to make this great Demonstration clear; that if a full History were written of this World, and what hath been conspicuous thorough the whole Series of Times past in all these Conjunctions of inferior Causes, (whether necessary, free, or contingent, and of such Events that seem most casual,) it should be nothing else but an exact Transcript and History of the Bible, to bear this witness, that the World is nothing, but God set forth in his own Scripture Light. But tho' a full Discovery hereof be not attainable within Time, yet is it a sad and deplorable Want, that the great Acts of the Lord, in each Age of the Church, are not more searched, and sought out of all them that take Pleasure therein, that they may be seen, observed, and admired, by that Part of the
Creation,

Creation, Angels, and Men, who are only in a Capacity to know the same. Which is a Service for the Lord, wherein his Praise and declarative Glory is so highly concerned, that a Christian should account the meanest Room herein, one of the most desirable Attainments within Time. Yea, it seems just Matter of Regret also, that this comes not under a more public Care and Notice of particular Churches, and of the Christian Magistrate (where Religion hath any true Regard,) to have such solemn Providences as occur in that Time and Place, which may be called most instructive Providences to the Church, (and of a further Reach and Extent than any private Use,) both searched after and recorded; as becomes so high a Service to the Christian Cause, and one of the highest Concerns of Posterity, in order to have them not only possessed of a pure Religion, but of that Seal also, which the Lord hath in the great Acts of Providence appended thereto. And thus to have that Increase, which each successive Age brings therewith to the public Stock of the Church, looked after, as a Piece of the greatest Trust reposed thereon; so that the Children

dren rise not up and say, we have not heard, nor have our Fathers faithfully communicated to us, the wondrous Works which the Lord hath wrought in their Time.

3. He is thus also taught to see the demonstrative Causes of the most strange Judgments on the Church, to be as clear in the Scripture, as they are in the Event. And tho' the holy God, in the Day of his Patience and Long-suffering, is not alike quick in the Execution of the Sentences of his Word; yet, does he ever establish the Authority of his Laws, by the Works of his Providence, in the most opportune Season, and as Judgment deferred is no Acquittance, so does it more threaten its being the greater, when it comes, than a quick and present Dispatch; yea, tho' this Tempest, which now blows on the Churches of Christ, come to a greater Height, and the Darkness be such, as no Moon, or Stars, may for many Days yet appear of any visible Signs of Hope; yet is his Soul thus at Rest, whilst he can see the Credit of the Truth cleared, on which he hath more in Trust than any Adventure within Time; and doth rejoice, whatever miscarrying
there

there may be of inferior Ends, that this great, and ultimate End of the Works of God is secured herein; and the Glory of his Truth doth shine forth in the most strange and amazing Acts of his Providence, whereat many are ready to stagger, when they do not wisely consider the same.

4. He sees now likewise, so high a Value which the Lord puts on the Trial of his People's Faith, and that the great Dispensation whereby he deals with Men, is by Trust, and on the Credit of his Word, as it adds further to his Confirmation, to see all human and visible Refuges oft taken out of his Church's Sight. Yea, his greatest Works in the Earth, make the greatest Delay ere they be brought forth, and his Church's Case is put so far beyond Help before a Cure, as the first quickning of her crushed, and almost dead Hope, must be at the Mouth of the Grave; and he is thus herein more singularly strengthened, that when the Lord speaks the same in the Way of Providence, which he hath spoke in his Word, (not by Might nor by Power,) that he doth with unspeakable Advantage, supply and fill the Room thereof
by

by the next Word, (but by my Spirit, faith the Lord.) Which in this Day should with a full Assurance of Faith be both sought and looked after.

5. It is in this rare Study, he attains also the greatest Confirmation to his Faith, that could possibly be desired within Time: to see now when 'tis so near the Close thereof, and after all the Revolutions of Times past, how the Truth and Faithfulness of God, hath, as the Sun in its Strength, still kept its Way straight and fixt amidst all those dark Clouds, which have been to darken the same, and is now gone its Course, until it draws near to the full and perfect Day; yea, thus to see how signally this present Age is held upon that same Appeal, and solemn Testimony, which *Joshua* gave, *Joshua* xxiii. 14. *That not one Thing hath failed of all the good Things which the Lord your God spake concerning you, all are come to pass to you, and not one Thing hath failed thereof; and Solomon did bear also at the Dedication of the Temple, 1 Kings viii. 56. Blessed be the Lord, that hath given Rest unto his People Israel, according to all that he promised, there hath not failed*

failed one Word of all his good Promise, which he promised by the Hand of Moles his Servant ; so is this now, that great Testimony of the latter Days, and the highest Tribute of Praise to the Glory of God in his Truth, which can be given by Men, that this present Generation stands accountable to make the same ; yea, much greater Appeal to the World, if they can instance one Promise or Prediction of that sacred Record of the Scripture, which hath ever failed or fallen to the Ground, but may be read this Day in the Event, and under those proper Circumstances wherein it was to take Place in its proper Season, as evidently as it was foretold. And must still bear the same Witness, *Psal. xviii. 30. That the Way of the Lord is perfect, and his Word tried on all the Adventurers of Faith and Trials*, which to this Moment of Time have been made hereof, and of his being still a Buckler to such as trust in him, and are called to send this glorious Testimony to the succeeding Ages, that it may never cease to shine or want a public Witness thereto, before Angels and Men, until the whole Mystery of God in his Word be finished, in that magnificent

42 *A Description of the confirmed*
ficient Close, which shall be thereof at
at the second coming of the Lord.

CHARACTER V.

A confirmed Christian, in this Day, should be thus also stated, as one, who hath not only attained a solid Rest and Settlement of Mind, upon the Certainty of the Christian Faith, but does know the pure genuine Truth of Christianity, amidst such high Oppositions betwixt the *Romish* and *Reformed Church* herein.

And, in the *first* Place, hath in this Manner held himself upon such a Trial; 1. As one, who knows there is but one true and saving Religion in the Earth, to which God hath annexed the Promise of eternal Life, which can never be divided against itself. 2. Who knows, that within a little while, his Religion will be tried in the Truth thereof at the Tribunal of Christ; where every Man must give Account of himself unto God. 3. Who sees there can be no possible Indifference in the exterior Profession of either Way, but that so high a Contrariety of Principles is in this Opposition, that if the Doctrine of Christ be on the one Hand, it is sure, *Antichristianism*

nism must be on the other Hand. 4. Yea, who hath in that abstract Manner sought to state the Case herein with his own Soul, as if he were just come out of *Paganism*, to give a serious Assent to the Divinity of the Scripture, and were now pressed to join in with that Profession of the Christian Faith, which is most exactly conform to the same, in the genuine and perspicuous Sense thereof.

In the *second* Place, he hath sought to know, how he could embrace the *Popish Creed*, and adventure his eternal State thereon; or, how he could extinguish his Reason and Conscience, so far as to believe, that the holy God would ever impose such a Faith upon Men as this is. 1. Where he must abandon these Principles of natural Reason, in the most necessary Use thereof, which God hath himself planted in Man's Soul: so as not to trust his own Eyes, but others, in that great Interest of his eternal State; and with his own Consent be shut out from all proper Knowledge of the Rule of his Religion; yea, account a blind and unlimited Obedience to Men, amongst the highest Excellencies of Faith. 2. Where he must at once believe the Fulness and

E

Per-

Perfection of the Scripture; which is not only fitted for that great End of bringing Mankind to God, but for such an universal Use herein; as to make the Simple wise, and cause the Poor to receive the Gospel; and yet believe also, that it is a Mass of dead and unsensed Characters, until the *Romish Clergy* put a just Sense thereon, tho' its Sense and Meaning is the very Soul thereof. Yea, thus pass from the Letter of the same, and all Certainty of its Truth, from intrinsick Evidences, and these Marks and Characters of its Divinity, whereby the Christian Cause could be maintained against *Pagans*. 3. Where he must believe also, that these are the Words of Christ, *John vii. 17. If any Man do my Will, he shall know my Doctrine, whether it be of God or not,* and that Men err through not knowing the Scripture, *Matth. xxii.* And yet believe all the while, that these sacred Fountains of Light should be shut up to keep Men from Errors; and that the sole Right of understanding the same, belongs to a few, not to the Multitude; who yet can pretend no extraordinary Assistance or Revelation herein, nor will themselves come to these Waters of Jealousy to be tried.

tried. 4. Where he must needs believe, that the Scriptures are the Oracles of God committed to the Church, to give Answer in every dark Case, *Rom. iii. 2.* The Type and Form of sound Doctrine, *Rom. vi. 17.* Unto whose Sentence, in all Matters, both of Faith and Practice, we are expressly referred, *Isaiah viii. 20.* And yet believe also, that it hath no Authority or decisive Voice; but what is precarious and dependent on the *Romish Church*, and thus consent to have the whole Christian Faith, visibly unhinged of the Foundation of the Scripture; and subjected to a supreme, visible, and pretended infallible Judge here in the Earth, with such a Claim of Dominion over the Faith of the Saints, as the Apostles of Christ durst never own, but did fully disclaim, *2 Cor. i. 24.* 5. Where he must believe, that Jesus Christ came for this End to save lost Man, and by one *Offering* hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, *Heb. io. 18.* And yet join with the same, a Faith of a human Satisfaction for Sin, so as Men may both merit, mediate, and supererogate, go above what is needful for themselves; and so be saved in the same Way of Life, which was by

the *Covenant of Works* ; ascribing no more to Christ, than the giving Salvation to Mens own Merits; which their own intrinsic Value and Condignity, doth require as a Debt. 6. He finds not how in the same Creed, he could possibly hold by one Mediator betwixt God and Man, where a Plurality for this End is admitted ; and by the Reality of Christ's human Nature, and his having a true and finite Body, which is subjected to have a new created Being, each Time in the consecrated Host ; or believe the Truth of his Sufferings, as now fully accomplished, and to be repeated no more, when it is in that daily Sacrifice of the Mass still offered, as a propitiatory Sacrifice for the Living and the Dead. So, on the most severe and impartial Enquiry, he cannot find, how one holding these Principles should go a further Length than Morality ; or claim another standing than by a *Covenant of Works*, 7. Nor knows he how to believe at once the Truth of the Gospel, to be a Doctrine of Holiness and infinite Purity, and yet join in the same Faith, such an Indulgence for Men to sin, that Money may stand for Merit, and the Rich may have the most easy and large

Entry

Entry into Heaven. Conceit that it is a Privilege for Men to destroy themselves; and by external Severities and Penance to the Flesh, like to the lancing and gashing of *Baal's* Priests, supply the Room of Christian Mortification. 8. Yea, he finds it not possible to believe, that Sin can only be expiated by the Blood of Christ; and is his alone Work, who hath purged our Sin himself, *Heb. i. 3.* Or, that there are more than two Ways that lead to a twofold State of Men; (a strait Way, which leads to a Life, and a broad unto Destruction, *Matth. vii. 14.*) and yet believe, that there is a Purgatory after this Life, wherein Men must be tormented and suffer extream Pains, to expiate such venial Sins, as their Prayers and Penances here could not do; yea, he is made to wonder, how any who believes such a Thing, can ever have true Peace or Comfort in the World; concluding, that Papists do either take it as a Fiction, or forget themselves, when they are chearful. For the Fear of such a Place, the Uncertainty of Release, and how long a Term it may be ere this purging Work be compleat, when their own Writers assign no less Time than

ten thousand Years, as needful to satisfy for some Sins, and fear lest it prove a real Hell, must still be a piercing Terror; nor can he believe, that such should credit themselves herein, who assume this Power to change the Condition of the Dead. Since were it really believed, that the Keys of such a Prison were here in Mens Hands, and Folk could, by the largest Bribes to the *Romish Church*, get a safe Deliverance thence; it were not strange to see the the *temporal State of Christendom*, in a short Time made over to these. We should judge they were, in a strange Manner, indeed, privileged above the whole Residue of Men, who by such a Power over the World to come could make so easy a Purchase of this also which is present. 9. He finds, and is sure, he could never get his Reason and Conscience brought to such a Faith, even tho' he made a feigned Profession herein, of that pretended Supremacy of *Peter*, as Bishop of *Rome*, on which the whole Frame and Structure of the *Papacy* leans, and the Virtue of all the Pardons and Absolutions founded thereon; on which so many have adventured into another World;

World; except he would build on the Sand only, and not on the Rock. 10. He finds also how such an Erection of the Gospel Church in her Militant State here, as the *Papacy* in its complex Frame is, united in such an Head, as the *Pope*, (who, as the sole Vicegerent of Christ in the Earth, is at once invested with a civil Monarchy, and universal Empire over the Church, to impose and judge in the highest Transactions, which relate to the eternal State and immortal Souls of Men,) is a Thing, that as to Matter of Right, is as foreign to the Scripture, and inconsistent therewith, as *Mahumetanism* can be. And as to Matter of Fact, is a Trust that no created Being could ever exercise. 11. He sees, and is sure, that he must either lose Sight, both of the Rule and Spirit of the Gospel, or have a just Abhorrence of that Way, wherein he should be inevitably involved in a virtual Consent, and Accessoriness to all that Cruelty and Blood, which for so many Ages hath been shed therein; when 'tis so clear that this was no Exorbitance only of Practice; but a native Result of their Tenets and Principles, and not only dispenced with, but counted an highly meritorious Service;

Service; yea, when it is sure, that under no secular Government of the most tyrannical State that ever was in the World, hath such arbitrary Violence and Oppression been exercised. Or so much innocent Blood been shed, as by this Party. 12. And tho' his Judgment stood undetermined, and in an equal Balance upon this great Controversy, he could not exercise Reason, and not see upon what Hand such a Decision is, as was in *Solomon's* Time of the true Mother of the Child; and who do most ruefully seek to interest themselves in the imminent Hazard of the Christian Faith, and who under the least Influence of any temporal Motives, do this Day stand for the Truth and Substance of Christianity, and plead that it be not destroyed in Envy and Hatred to them; or on what Side it is likely, that this Manner of Conquest is most followed to gain Men to the Profession of the Truth, by a prevailing Evidence of their own Light and Judgment herein, and to require their exactest personal Trial and Enquiry about the same.

In the *third* Place, tho' he sees there can be no Pretence of doctrinal Waver-
ing about the Reformed Religion, and
finds

finds it not easy to comprehend, how in one and the same Age, wherein the Truth hath so brightly shined, this Way of *Po-pery* should have Prevalence, or gain Ground any more, by Seduction with Arguments to the Reason or Conscience of any; yet, since it is an Hour of Temptation and of Fainting, above all that have been hitherto known, and Mens Eyes are arrested with such a Prospect of the Times, as is like to stagger the Faith of the most established; he is pressed, (as counting it one of the highest Duties of this Day,) to know and search out what may afford greatest Assistance to his Faith, from the Dispensations of Providence therein, and to know the Evidence and Strength of such Reflections, as these are for this End.

1. That 'tis sure, as the smallest Things which the Lord does afford to strengthen and support against such a Storm, should be seriously improved and taken to Heart; so does it lay us in the Way of that Promise for, having greater Things given to our Observation; yea, that now is the Time, when such as have been most comforted by the Word of Promise, may be put to the sorest Trial in their Faith of
any,

any, to keep off stumbling at the Work of Providence ; and be thus tried according to the Measure of these Confirmations.

2. Tho' the Churches Declinings, under greatest Measures of Light, may be too visible, and that Religion gains not by Persecution as formerly, with such an amazing Change as is now in her external Condition, yet he sees it to be no strange Thing, when most signal Warnings have gone before of such a Trial, with too evident Dispositions towards the same, and Discovery of its Approach in all the Causes thereof; yea, might be foreseen by all, that the holy God would not still bear with an impure and unenlivened Profession of the pure and glorious Truth of Christianity, which hath now long been one of the most sad and mortal Signs in the public State of Religion; nor can it be found, that ever any Church did decline and fall from the Purity of the Truth, and lose Ground herein by external Persecution, where a judicial Departure of its Life and Power did not remarkably go before; so as it is not of late, this hath been clearly presaged, that some dark and unusual Measure of Trial from Antichrist,

christ, and the last Havock of the Reformed Churches was drawing near, which would be fore ere it had done its Work.

3. He sees also, how this present Hour is not more searching and dark, than it may be clear herewith. 1. That now, after the Issue of that Opposition, which was betwixt the Christian Faith in the first Entry of the Gospel, and that dying apostate Church of the *Jews*; and next, with the Pagan Empire, after that new Erection of the Gospel Church among the *Gentiles*, which is now over; so is the greatest Trial of the latter Days fixed on the Decision of that long depending Controversy betwixt Christ and Antichrist. 2. That, according to the Scripture, we must believe, that as after the Manner of *Egypt*, that glorious Triumph and Delivery of the Church from Antichrist will be surely carried on; so the more near it comes to the last Assault; (and when this falls in to have its proper Room in the Frame and Administration of Providence;) the greater Extremity, Terror, and Darknes may be expected also, such as hath not been in any former Time. Yea, with that united and formidable

midable Conjunction of Strength and growing Success of this Adversary for a Time, that the most established Christians may be in Hazard to stagger 3. That, now is the Day, wherein the Lord will have Men know, what it is to have the Bible, as the alone Security of the Protestant Religion, on which they must entirely rest, no less than as it is the sole Rule and Standard thereof; which is a Trial worthy of all that Expence of the Pain, Anguish, and Wrestlings, that can now possibly attend the same.

4. Whilst the great Standard of Antichrist's Kingdom is visibly set up and brought to the open Field, as 'tis this Day in the Church of *France*, and all human Help taken out of Sight; yet does he see herewith. 1. How this now is concluded, as the most infallible Remedy to recover Popery. And that Argument, to which they trust more than to *Peter's* Keys, to wit, these sanguinary Laws by the Sword and Rack, which they have again betaken themselves to, tho' such an Argument the Scripture never knew, and sober Heathens would abhor, and which gives up the Credit of all Religion to Atheism. 2. That there can be no more Evidence

Evidence of a desperate and sinking Cause than is here, and nothing else can support it, but these Weapons which are not against the Conscience; or by any Terror of the second Death, but of the first.

3. That this is such an Argument, if they have not in a strange Manner forgot, which hath within these hundred Years been so fully answered, and by such an immediate Appearance of God in the Kingdom of *France*, that, according to these Measures of Cruelty against the Protestants there, so was it returned in a Deluge of their own Blood, yea, so both the public State of the Church, and Faith of the Saints, in the Truth was more deeply rooted; and tho' we yet see not the End of these Wonders, but the Dark-side only of the Dispensations of such a Day, yet do we know this sore Rod on the Church, is but as the Saw and Ax in the Carpenter's Hand, who shall never undo that glorious Work which Christ hath done, and is still further perfecting on the Ruins of Antichrist's Kingdom.

5. Tho' some unusual Deepes and Methods of Subtilty be now on Foot also against the Truth; yet he cannot but see,

F

how

how nothing could more effectually tend to confirm the Protestant Cause, and take the Credit of Popery off the Consciences of those in their own Profession, who are considerate and in the least serious herein; when the World must thus see. 1. How easy it is for such to take any Measure and Latitude in the Doctrinals of their Profession, when this can most serve the Juncture of such a Time, and heighten or narrow the Controversy betwixt them, and the Reformed Church at their Pleasure; so as to sacrifice the *Church of Rome* unto the Court of *Rome*, if no less can secure that End. 2. That the most horrid *Turkish* Slavery over Mens Bodies comes no such Length, as that strange Claim that these now make of an absolute Empire over Mens Consciences by the Sword; and to put them to such a Tribute of their Obedience, that they shall then be secure, if they but come the Length to sin against their Light, and adventure on so small a Thing as to go to Hell, and perish eternally; since 'tis an external and feigned Profession of such a Way that they do thus force from those, who they see cannot in Faith be persuaded hereof. 3. Yea, it hath

hath been too visible, how much that Master-plot and Engine, hath in these Times been working, to take Men first off from all Sense of Religion, and destroy them in the Morals of Christianity, to make this Conquest more easy, that such may have no inward Defence and Support against the Terror of human Violence. Yea, in this Way, when they have sought how to divide Protestants among themselves, and betwixt Rulers and them, this seems the last and greatest Engine of all, how to divide betwixt them and their God, acting the same Plot, which was laid betwixt *Balak* and *Balaam*, as knowing that 'tis no naked Shew or Profession of the Reformed Religion they need fear, so much as that old Protestant Spirit in the Power and Life thereof, before which their Interest could never stand; and dread nothing so much as the reviving hereof; which, as the Hand-writing upon the Wall, did ever more threaten the fatal Ruin of that Kingdom, than any human Power or Strength.

6. Here also he finds just Cause of Astonishment, how Kings, or great Men, in the Earth, should give their Power to

support the *Romish* Interest, which hath been so visibly destructive to theirs: When 'tis not possible to deny how its first Advance and Progress to that supreme Height, which it once attained; and the declining of the civil Empire, did by the same Steps go together; until Magistracy was turned unto a dead Image and Shadow, except its being enlivened by their Breath and Authority, as it was during the whole Height of that Antichristian Power. Nor will it be denied, that, in these late Times, the *French* Monarchy was never more near its Dissolution in its right Line than by the *Catholick* League there; and it would seem not easy to be forgot, how *Henry* the Third, who had most sought to crush the Protestants in pursuance of that League, was at last constrained to flee to such for Help; or by whom he was killed; and that heroick Prince *Henry* the Fourth, who was first stabbed in the Mouth and then in the Heart; yea, that the public Records of that Nation cannot possibly deny, but the House of *Bourbon*, owes its Power and Preservation, more to the Protestants, (without whom it had been fully extinct,) than

than *Ahashuerus* did to *Mordecai* the *Jew*, for what he found written in the *Chronicles of Persia*, when the Decree was then past to destroy all the Seed of the *Jews*.

7. As in no Times past was ever a greater Expectation than is now, which Way the Scale will turn, and what will be the End of these Wonders, when the nearest Events of Providence are so dark and amazing; so does he find this, in some extraordinary Way called for, to be still, and see what God will do for his Church, and with humble Confidence, look for some such Dispensation, as hath not hitherto been in this extream Exigence. And tho' he do not appear in that Way and Manner as in former Times, that it shall be in a Way more signally glorious, beyond what hath formerly been; yea, he does in Faith thus judge, that then is the Church's Day broke, and hath found the sure Way of her Strength, and right Line of Duty; when her Hope and Confidence is taken off from all visible Refuges, and entirely settled on her invisible Head, and his Promise put to suit by Prayer without faint-

60 *A Description of the confirmed*
ing herein. It is sure, the Truth and Faithfulness of God, stands engaged for Antichrist's Fall, as well as for Salvation by Christ, and since he hath said, this Adversary shall be broke and brought down, it must surely be, tho' the Dust of the Ground should rise for this End, and now is the Faith of the Saints called for becoming the Greatness of such an Assurance, on which are the Eyes of Men, of their own Consciences, of the elect Angels, yea, of the glorious God, to see who does indeed credit him in this Day, when there is no sensible Support herein; and tho' it now threatens sorely the Departure of many from the Faith, who had some visible Profession thereof, yet may it be hoped for, that the Turn of the next Tide shall bring in more, with a solid and true Increase to the Church, than these sad Days do now take off.

CHARACTER VI.

It is thus a confirmed Christian should be specially considered, as one, who is not only at Rest on the known Certainty of his Faith, but is ready to render some
Account

Account of the solid rational Grounds and Demonstrations hereof, unto all who ask after the same, and doth thus judge,

1. That these are the proper and appointed Means, which the Lord hath afforded for the greatest Confirmation of Mens Faith within Time; yea, preferable to any external Miracles, which are more extraordinary and remote Assistances thereto. 2. That these are given as such a great Help to his Joy, and Excitement of his Affections to follow the Lord fully, as may make him wonder how the Greatness of these Things, (which Men are called to believe.) can come near their Thoughts, and yet no more take them up about this confirming Work. 3. That the too visible Neglect hereof, both with respect to the Youth, and Community of Professors in the Church, seems one of the sad and fundamental Defects of this Day. The Reasons hereof, with some clear View of these Means, which might most answer such an End, are briefly offered in this preceding Work.

CHARACTER

CHARACTER VII.

A truly confirmed Christian, may in the last Place be herein also considered, as such, whose Faith being oft tried thro' all these Stages of Christianity he hath been taken; hath some proper Record of the most choice and signal Confirmations of his Life, to improve the same, not only for his own Support in that last Warfare of Death, but for strengthening the Faith of others; wherein he does thus judge,

1. That there could be no true Support or Relief from Religion here in the Earth, if it cannot bear out then. And that Death is the great Touchstone and Trial, when the true Value and Difference betwixt Things of an eternal Truth and Substance, and the Things of this World will be best seen. 2. He reckons each real Christian, by his Profession then engaged and accountable, even by some explicate personal Testimony, to put to his Seal that God is true, and bear the same Witness, with his last and dying Breath to the Truth of Christianity, which

which he gave in the whole Course of his Life; and of that Joy, Complacence and Assurance of Mind, which he hath found, and now hath in the Way of Truth: So as to press the same on his dearest Relations, as their alone true Interest. 3. He sees also, how honourable it is for the Lord, that such, whose Faith hath been oft tried, (and when thus with Joy and Admiration, he can look back on the most pressing and conspicuous Conflicts of Time,) should have it their last Work to pay in some Tribute of Praise unto him, whose Word and Promise unto them, did yet never fail. 4. He accounts the more weighty Trials he hath been carried thro' in his Christian Warfare, do both add more to this Service, and impart more to the Value of such a Testimony, 5. He judgeth this one special Way and Advantage, whereby one Generation might declare the Truth and Faithfulness of God unto another, in a Family-Line and Relation, to shew forth thus, that the Lord is upright; that he is their Rock, and with him is no Unrighteousness. Yea, which should be Matter of unspeakable Joy, when now
in

in his Turn, he can say, that such hath the Lord been to him; what were *David's* dying Words, *1 Kings i. 14. Who hath delivered my Soul out of all Distress,* how that in no Trouble, or Exigence of his Life, he was ever left without a Door of Hope, and thus also with *Caleb, Joshua xiv. 10.* To give in some such Witness for God, "I am now near the Close of Time, and do testify, that the Word of his Truth and Promise, he hath surely accomplished; which hath brought me safe and honourably through, when such as did distrust the same by Misbelief, and sought after another Refuge, found all their Confidences fail." 6. And knowing likewise how great a Surprizal Death may be; and that such as have shined in their Day, may yet set under a Cloud, and go silent off the Stage; he judgeth it the more needful to have such a Piece of his dying Work prepared, as one of the choicest Legacies he can bequeath to his surviving Friends, in a Season, when it hath usually the greatest Advantage of Weight and Acceptance; it being still qualified with Christian Prudence and humble Sobriety; so as all
may

may see its whole Intent is to commend to Mens Conscience the Way of Truth and Godliness, and not themselves, and thus direct it for the proper Use and Improvement of their nearest Relations. I know it may be strange to some, what is spoke upon this Head; but as 'tis sure the present Day hath its Duty, and each Time of our Life hath some proper Work, so I humbly judge, that this seems to fall in, as the last Service of a dying Christian to his Generation, to deliver off his Hand the Truth which he had received and hath oft proved, with his confirmatory Seal and Testimony thereto. And now is it in some more than ordinary Way called for in this Hour of great Darkeness, when, if the Security of the absolute Promises stood not good to the Church, we might fear Religion might quickly wear out, and Truth perish from the Earth; and as so solemn and weighty a Thing should it be managed with much humble Prudence, so that it may be judged, that there is no serious and observing Christian, but hath some peculiar Engagements, under which they find themselves held even beyond others,
yea,

66 *A Description of the confirmed*

yea, some such singular Confirmations in the Journal of their Life, that should not be easy to hide under the Ground; where the strengthening of others hereby is concerned; and that such should not then leave the Cross of Jesus Christ at a Loss, or part therewith without their Testimony, which hath left them at so great an Advantage. And tho' this is not to offer particular Rules in such a Duty, but that Christian Wisdom must direct herein, as the present Case is circumstantiated, yet might it be hoped, were this more taken to Heart, it should be a singular Means to make more deep Impressions of Mens dying Work on their Spirits. Even whilst they are in Health, to excite their surviving Friends, and to keep Religion thus alive in a Family State and Relation, and gain a more venerable Respect to the same on Mens Consciences; yea, to fix also stronger Engagements on the succeeding Offspring.

Thus is presented here, a short Idea of the solid and judicious Work of Christian Confirmation in the Truth, under these foregoing Characters, to
shew,

shew, how rare an Attainment of Religion this is, yea, to present herein a special Series and Scale of the greatest Steps in this confirmatory Work, by which it should be followed. And none of these may be parted from other, tho' some be of an higher and more absolute Use for such an End. And if it should be objected here, What needs any such Expence of Time, or Pains in this Case, when 'tis sure the essential Truths of the Gospel are not questioned, and that without internal Evidence of the Spirit, no external Means of this Kind can be of Use. I know that 'tis the alone Work of the Holy Ghost, to beget a divine and supernatural Faith; without which the furthest Light and objective Evidence, tho' backed with a continued Dispensation of external Miracles, could never bear Christians out, either as to Duty or Comfort, in their Passage thorow Time; yea, nothing is in the least here to subject the Credit of our Faith to Mens rational Comprehension, but rather tends to enervate wholly the Strength of any such Tenet,

G

and

and take off all Pretence for the same : But 'tis sure also, I must quit all solid Security in the Way of Religion, and any clear Founding in the Light and Certainty of the Scripture, or admit these Things as undeniable.

1. That supernatural Faith is the most highly rational Light that's within Time. And that none, who profess the Name of Christ, can be of so low a Size, as should not be pressed and excited to be much about this Ground-work of knowing the Truth and Principles of their Profession upon its own Evidence ; yea, are thus called, *as new born Babes to drink in the sincere Milk of the Word*, 1 Pet. ii. Which, as 'tis clearly in the Original, is the *rational Milk of the Word*, to be thus received, no less on Conviction and Certainty of the Judgment, than with the outgoing of their Affections.

2. That as 'tis not conceiveable, how a true and firm Assent can be to divine Truth, but on its known Certainty, so here is no resolving of the Christian's Faith on the strongest rational Evidences hereof, which must
still

still be resolved on the Testimony of God, made clear and evident to them to be such.

3. It is sure also, the Lord hath not given so large a Measure of these Grounds and Demonstrations of his Truth, with such redoubled Arguments of that Kind, to be of so small Regard as is with most. But for some great and universal Use hereof to the whole Church, and knew how needful such Assistances to the Faith of his People would be whilst they are on the Earth.

4. That these Means, which tend most convincingly to found a rational Assurance in the Judgment, are the proper Vehicle of the Spirit of God, by which his sealing Work should be both sought and expected; nor can I judge how the Credit and Use hereof should be so small, and not on the same Ground quit any external Ordinance of the Gospel; which without the Spirit of the Lord can never profit, nor how we should expect and suit his confirming Work on the Soul, when these greatest confirming Means, which

he hath given to the Church, have no just Weight: But, oh! how wonderful a Teacher is the Holy Ghost, when such ordinary Means fail, and are inaccessible, by furnishing his People then with these strongest Arguments of Love and Power, who having had but small Measures of Light, yet were not unfaithful to improve the smallest Degree of such a Talent?

5. Yea, so great a Thing is it, to attain a solid Faith of Things wholly remote from our Sense, and so far above the Reach and Apprehension of Nature, or to have an absolute Reliance on an invisible Refuge for our present and eternal State, as no common Assent can answer, when the very Rest and quiet of the Soul, must needs lie in the sure and firm Perswasion hereof.

6. It is too visible also, how little the practical Use of such a Mean hath yet been essayed in the Church, that all who are Members thereof, might no less know the Strength and Firmness of the Foundations of their Faith, by its own Evidence, than the general Articles of
of

of Religion. The most usual instructing Work lies almost wholly about the noetic Part of Divinity, there seems not that serious Regard to press the dianoetic Part hereof on Mens Conscience, as if this were to be restrained to a few, who are more knowing, learned, and of an inquisitive Spirit about the rational Certainty of the Truth, and for whom these choice and abundant Helps of this Kind, which are in this Age, seem more peculiarly directed. 'Tis sure, that the Christian Faith in the first Times did remarkably then spread and prevail, by these clear Evidences hereof to the Judgment, made effectual by the Spirit of God, more than by extraordinary Miracles. Nor knew they otherwise what it was to be Christians, but by embracing the Truth, with a full Assurance of Understanding, no less than of Delight and Affection. But if it be objected, it is not the Case now, where Religion is planted in a Nation, and hath an uncontrollable public Profession under the Support of human Laws; I know no admitted Weight this can have, except

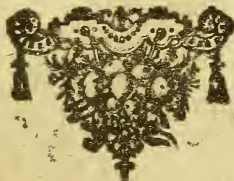
that it should be granted, that Christians now be born, and not new created.

7. Yea, is it not sure, tho' it seem little understood, that the primary Grounds and Evidences of our Faith, are not only as to their End, demonstrative of the Truth and Divinity of the Scripture, but are upon the Matter, such Demonstrations also, which most natively result from the same by infallible Consequence; and are thus to be accounted, not as humane but divine Arguments, given us by the Spirit of God.

8. I shall but further add, how such as do seriously ponder Things, will find this Demonstration to be no more important than clear, that to be a confirmed Christian, and a confirmed Protestant are convertible Terms; and that if they that are under that deplorable Bondage and Darknes of Popery, were but once awakened to see the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Faith, by its intrinsic and objective Evidence, and taken off that brutish Credulity and Dependence on the alone
Credit

Credit of others herein, it might be said the strongest Engine to hold up that Profession were then broke, and we should see the Doctrine and Rule of Faith, to be of such full and perspicuous Evidence from the Scripture, as without Blasphemy, they could not seek from the Lord to give them a plainer Rule, than what he hath there given.

F I N I S.





CHANGES

AND

TROUBLES.

PPeace, wayward Soul! let not those various
Storms,
 Which hourly fill the World with fresh Alarms,
 Invade thy Peace; nor discompose that Rest,
 Which thou may'st keep untouch'd within thy Breast.
 Amidst those Whirlwinds, if thou keep but free
 The Intercourse betwixt thy God and thee;
 Thy Region lies above these Storms; and know,
 Thy Thoughts are earthly, and they creep too low,
 If these can reach thee, or Access can find,
 To bring or raise like Tempests in thy Mind.
 But yet in these Disorders something lies,
 That's worth thy Notice, out of which the wise
 May trace and find that just and powerful Hand,
 That secretly but surely doth command,
 And manage these Distempers with that Skill,
 That

That while they seem to cross, they act his Will.
 Observe that silver Thread, that steers and bends
 The worst of all Disorders, to such Ends,
 That speak his Justice, Goodness, Providence,
 Who closely guides it by his Influence.
 And though these Storms are loud, yet listen well,
 There is another Message that they tell:
 This World is not thy Country; 'tis thy way;
 Too much Contentment would invite thy stay
 Too long upon thy Journey; make it strange,
 Unwelcome News, to think upon a Change:
 Whereas these rugged Entertainments send
 Thy Thoughts before thee to thy Journey's End;
 Guide thy Desires all homewards; tell thee plain,
 To think of resting here is but in vain;
 Make thee to set an equal Estimate
 On this uncertain World, and a just Rate
 On that to come; they bid thee wait and stay
 Until thy Master's Call, and then with Joy
 To entertain it. Such a Change as this,
 Renders thy Loss, thy Gain; improves thy Bliss.

